DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 284 804 SO 018 301

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TITLE Social Science, Social Scientists, and the Social Studies.
PUB DATE Jun 87
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Social Science Education Consortium (Logan, UT, June 11, 1987).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Citizenship Education; Civics; Course Organization; Curriculum Design; Curriculum Development; *Educational Innovation; Instructional Improvement; Instructional Materials; Learning Activities; Political Science; Social Science Research; *Social Sciences; *Social Scientists; *Social Studies; Sociology
IDENTIFIERS *Social Studies Curriculum

ABSTRACT

The social sciences may be viewed as policy sciences and, as such, can make significant contributions to both public policy and the social studies curriculum. Political science has made contributions in legislative reform, centralized budgeting, regulation of lobbying, and improvement of election administration. Sociology has helped make significant progress in child care, crime, and housing matters and helped create VISTA and Upward Bound. Psychology has provided decision-making tools in hiring personnel, dealing with mental illness, and the nature of learning. Social scientists who have engaged in pre-college curriculum development made their greatest contribution to course design. They provided exciting and active learning experiences that enabled the teacher to assume a learning manager role rather than being merely a dispenser of information. More of the materials developed by social scientists will be adopted as educators feel pressure from various commission reports recommending change. Today, social scientists are better able to structure learning experiences and address important citizenship education issues. (SM)

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SOCIAL SCIENCE, SOCIAL SCIENTISTS, AND THE SOCIAL STUDIES

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Presented to

Annual Meeting of the Social Science Education Consortium

Utah State University
Logan, Utah

June 11, 1987

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Social Science, Social Scientists, and the Social Studies

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Background of This Paper

At last year's meeting of the Social Science Education Consortium at Stanford University I was asked to discuss the two papers given by Nicholas Helburn and John Chilcott, two social scientists who are very thoughtful about their disciplines and their relationships to citizenship education. I pointed out that the papers were presenting the nature of two social science disciplines -- their structure and methodology -- and how those disciplines could be translated into powerful knowledge for teachers and children. More importantly, we recognized in the papers and in the discussion that followed that organized bodies of knowledge empower an individual as a citizen in a democratic society. I went on to mention how refreshing it was to read and listen to social science disciplinarians thoughtfully examining their disciplines with respect to pre-college education.

I reminded us that anthropologists, economists, geographers, political scientists, psychologists, and sociologists took great professional risks in the 1960s and 1970s to engage in pre-college curriculum development work. In my judgment,that work produced some of the most exciting materials ever made available on the social studies scene. I suspect if we revisited the materials carefully, we would find they meet many of the current reform goals being stated today. I raised questions about the roles of social scientists in curriculum development, what they have been able to contribute in the past decade, and how they might be more involved today. We

encouraged the social scientists to continue to translate their language for us, to keep their rigor coming, and to be willing to participate in the social studies education enterprise.

Apparently my remarks struck some familiar cords. (I had also mentioned that I had a feeling of deja vu in listening to the papers. I could have been at an SSEC meeting in 1966.) I was asked to prepare and give a paper this year on the nature of social science education and the social studies.

I put off the preparation of these remarks until close to the last minute, but I remember the saying that there is nothing like a deadline to generate production. Also, I have taken a new and demanding position this year and much of my mind has been focused on my new work. Therefore, I would like to ask you to treat this as a paper in progress. It is something I prepared for my friends at SSEC to spark discussion.

Over the past few years, I have asked myself several questions about our profession related to social science education. These questions have helped me organize my thoughts here.

-- What is the status of social studies education today?

-- What are we being asked to do?

-- Why is social science important and what are its contributions?

-- What did the social scientists contribute in the 1960s and 1970s?

-- What happened to what was called social science education?

-- What issues should we be addressing today regarding social science education?

Status of Social Studies Education

We have been down many paths before. We have repeated ourselves. We have tried new things -- some successfully, some unsuccessfully -- and cast them aside. We tinker a lot. We go off on tangents. Yet, we really stay on a fairly straight and narrow path. Bragaw (1986) has pointed out to us that no matter how we have arranged content (and we haven't really rearranged it much since 1916), several constants have remained. I list them here.

-- A clear commitment to democratic values.

-- A need for students to know, to take pride in, and be able to call on their historical roots.

-- A need for students to know the structure and functioning of their governing and economic institutions, and to be able to compare them to others.

-- A need to engage in more active civic participation.

-- A call for student learning that commits them to active learning--social interaction.

-- A recognition of other cultures and the varying values systems that exist throughout the world.

What Are We Being Asked To Do?

There have been about 30 research synthesis and commission reports issued since 1982. It is mind boggling to sort through them and to understand what we are being asked to do. At the most general level there seem to be two major goal areas, both concerned with preparation of students to function in the 21st century: 1) The preparation of responsible citizens and productive workers to maintain the nation's economic power, national security, and democratic system; 2) The development of an educated person to live a rich, rewarding life. There also are some general themes we are being asked to attend to: quality (or excellence); a rigorous curriculum; higher academic standards; more common learning among all students; an orderly, disciplined school environment; time-on-task; continuous diagnosis

and assessment of learning; accountability of teachers; strong leadership of the principal; a school climate emphasizing academic achievement; shared goals; and closer relationships with the larger community. (See Lake, 1984)

The reports' goals and themes give us little specific direction for the social studies. Newmann (1985) states the situation like this.

> As a whole, the reports reiterate a conception of citizenship that has been endorsed for years by most schools. Repeatedly they call for an understanding of history and human institutions, implying that fundamental issues in social organization have been essentially resolved (e.g. through the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of rights, capitalism, and modern technology); if only people understood the foundations of democratic civilization, peace and justice would prevail. None of the reports preaches blind patriotism, and all advocate development of complex thinking skills. But no report emphasizes the need to build a social critique, to stimulate assertive citizen action toward a higher public good, or to participate in the generation of social knowledge itself.

Recently, the National Council for the Social Studies announced the formation of a National Commission for the Social Studies. The charge to the commission is to examine, in cooperation with national history and social science organizations, what the goals of social studies should be in the 21st century (Bragaw, 1986). In the same issue of Social Education which discusses the National Commission, five (new) rationales for the social studies are presented. (These are in addition to the 1983 report of the NCSS Task Force on Scope and Sequence.) As I read these rationales, I was struck by the mere lip service given to social science education:

> The social science disciplines of economics, anthropology, sociology, political science, and psychology give to the social studies the theoretical insights, the conceptual rigor and the precision of language that are indispensable tools for the study of societies and cultures. (Downey, 1986)

> The curriculum should utilize relatively large quantities of data from a variety of sources such as history, the social sciences, literature and journalism, as well as (and possibly most important) from students' first hand experience. (Engle and Ochoa, 1986)

> Transformative social education not only utilizes traditional sources of data from the humanities and social sciences, the sciences, the arts and from social issues themselves, but also subjects those data to criticism. (Stanley and Nelson, 1986)

> The content of social studies is drawn primarily from history, the social sciences and humanities. But we must also acknowledge the contributions of other fields like natural sciences, journalism, future studies, policy studies, development studies, and environmental studies. (Kniep, 1986)

> Use the social sciences, history, literature, social mathematics (statistics, probability, social indicators, data based management systems) and the fine arts to describe and explain social phenomena. (Hartoonian and Laughlin, 1986)

After reading the rationales, the mere presentation of which has caused quite a stir in some social studies circles, I was first puzzled, then hurt, then disappointed, then angry. I was puzzled because it seemed we had forgotten the social science education contributions of the not too distant past. I was hurt because some of my friends in the social sciences were obviously given short shrift...at least I thought they had been. I was disappointed in not seeing more on what was important about the social sciences and the kinds of contributions they could made to curriculum. I was angry because I felt I had been invited to a party but told to show up late and be sure to leave early. I was reminded of Larry Senesh's comment several years ago, "The social scientist is like a mufti sniffing around the educational tent in the desert, but never being allowed in."

Importance of Social Science and Its Contributions

In all of education we are being asked to become more rigorous, to strive for quality and excellence, and to set higher academic standards. The social studies is/are no exception. (Witness the legislative mandates in Texas as one specific example.) It almost goes without saying that the

social sciences can help with quality, excellence, and rigor. What is important about social science?

1. It has structure. In a social science, concepts are organized in such a way that the social scientist can set forth the organizing principles of the discipline. Structure tells us the important conceptual ideas which may be taught and the sequence in which they might be addressed.

2. Structure enables the disciplinarian to convey the discipline to others relatively efficiently. The power of a discipline structure is critical to providing needed organizers for both understanding and clarity of thinking about policy matters as they relate to the discipline.

3. Structure guides the creation of new knowledge. Investigation in a discipline often yields purposeful and thoughtful changes in the nature of a discipline as the result of learning new knowledge. In addition, research results (new knowledge) suggest clearer definition and redefinition of issues important to the society at large. New knowledge can also help set the policy direction for dealing with important and troubling social issues.

4. Structure changes. The acknowledgment that a discipline structure changes affords the social scientist the opportunity to know how new knowledge has an impact on the whole of the discipline and thus on how the discipline can be configured for learners.

When I first began my career in this field, I heard charges that the social sciences were sterile, that they were merely bodies of knowledge pretty much fixed in time and space. My own discipline was called dismal -- an erroneous generalization to the entire discipline from Malthusian theory. Like many who teach a discipline for the first time, I wanted to be sure my students understood all the nuances of the discipline. I taught a lot about

trees, but forgot to teach about the forest. When I recognized that my students were bored silly, I began to think more about social issues and policy matters to address as I was teaching, but I didn't give up the cornerstones of discipline knowledge. Soon it became clear to me that the social sciences could be wonderful and exciting subjects for study if we would think about their contributions to issues and policy.

The social sciences are intellectual disciplines that study humans as social beings by means of the scientific method. It is the focus on human beings as members of society, on groups and societies that humans form, and on the nature of human behavior that distinguishes the social sciences from the physical and biological sciences. The social sciences have been called "soft." I disagree. The methods of social science research and analysis are "hard," just as they are in other sciences. It is just that in social science we are dealing with different objects -- human beings and their behavior. I should remind us that Kenneth Boulding has defined a human as follows: "A non-linear computer produced by unskilled labor." No wonder we have difficulty with "hardness!"

Many social scientists devote their academic careers to empirical or basic research which helps define and redefine their disciplines. Many social scientists also work in applied research, devoting much of their attention to possible solutions to troublesome human problems. Although my social science friends may quarrel with me, I would claim that the social sciences now should be viewed as policy sciences and, as such, can make significant contributions to both public policy and to the social studies curriculum. I will just list a few of these policy contributions to illustrate.

-- Anthropology has given us great insight into the nature of culture (often a school subject). More recently, anthropology has provided significant policy insight into the nature of poverty, life in a ghetto, and the culture of the school.

-- Economics has helped us understand large units of measurement with the institution of national income accounting. In addition, economics has given us significant assistance in dealing with inflation, depression, the balance of payments, and the nature of human capital.

-- Human geography has helped us recognize how ideas are transmitted, how we might control environmental hazards, and how to plan for land use.

-- Political science has assisted us with policies related to legislative reform, centralized budgeting, regulation of lobbying, and improvement of election administration.

-- Sociology, often concerned with matters of socioeconomic status, has helped to create programs such as Upward Bound and VISTA, and has helped make significant progress in child care, crime, and housing matters.

-- Psychology has provided us with helpful decision-making tools with respect to hiring personnel, dealing with mental illness, and the nature of learning.

While we might say the social sciences are in their infancy and that their policy insights are confusing to the lay person, I think we need to recognize four powerful characteristics about the disciplines: 1) They are organized bodies of knowledge with defined structures that can enable us to gain some understanding of various aspects of human behavior; 2) The structure of each discipline, although it's not perfect and probably never will be, provides a research agenda for the discipline, thus enabling new knowledge to be created; 3) The issues addressed by the social science disciplines are real issues for society -- as such, their definition and description (to the extent the social scientist can amass data for good description) are useful in helping us (and students) understand current issues of social reality; and 4) While the social sciences do not ignore the past, they function in the present and look to the future -- something all of us in the social studies profession are being asked to do.

What Did the Social Scientists Contribute?

The social scientists who engaged in curriculum development made their greatest contribution to course design. They gave us insight into how to tap the knowledge base for purposes of instruction. They provided us with exciting and active learning experiences which enabled the teacher to assume a learning manager role with students, rather than a dispenser of information role. I would like to think (even for one brief shining moment) that social scientists helped empower kids.

Here are some of my observations about their contributions directly related to the materials they developed:

-- The thoughtfulness of a 6th grade girl when she realized she used a stereotyping label after experiencing a human behavior specimen in the Social Science Laboratory Units.

-- The aha!! expressions when students encountered the perception experiments in Sociological Resources for the Social Studies.

-- The powerful conceptual understanding which occurred as a result of a programmed learning module combined with an investigative activity in ECON 12.

-- The feeling of success in students who made sound generalization about the Kalahari Bushmen after doing a simulated anthropological dig in the Anthropological Curriculum Study Project.

-- The kid who said "damn" and meant it when the bottom fell out of the grain market in the Game of Farming in the High School Geography Project. He knew what it was like to be a farmer in the Great Depression.

I could go on, but I think I have made my point.

What Happened to Social Science Education?

The charges we heard against social science education beginning in the early 1970s and throughout that decade won the day (or the decade). (See Barr, Barth, and Shermis, 1977; and Morrissett, 1979.) I state them here in the present tense with my views on them.

1. Defining a discipline somehow imposes concepts on students. I suspect the notion of "imposition" on the part of the disciplinarians is

offensive to many educators. I also suspect disciplinarians are viewed as rigid and insensitive to student needs because of the perceived impositions. Yet, I would remind us that defining a discipline is what the nature of knowledge is all about. It is difficult to make sense of what we observe in the world without having some kind of organizer (structure if you will) inside our heads. Knowledge is so vast, and increasing at such a rapid rate, that it is vital to have some kind of organizer in order to deal with it.

2. Social scientists try to make mini-social scientists out of students. I don't think this charge carries much weight. One or even two courses in sociology, economics, or political science at the pre-college level does not a mini-social scientist make. Yet, a course is likely to be helpful in enabling students to see the power of the discipline and the method of analysis important to understanding at least a slice of social reality. (Parenthetically, I might suggest the same charge could be raised with respect to the current thrust in history education, especially in such states as California.)

3. Social scientists are not concerned with decision-making and participation. Perhaps this charge has some credibility if the social science is taught merely as a body of knowledge to be memorized. (I wonder how much content in social studies is currently being taught for memorization.) As I have said above, the social sciences are policy oriented. As such, they provide wonderful opportunities for the examination of real problems and opportunities to suggest solutions.

Another phenomenon occurred in the past 20 years in social science education. I call it the "pillow theory of educational change." Now, I am aware of several theories of educational change -- top down models, social

interaction, client-centered problem solving processes — and I have thought about these models with respect to what happened. But for now I prefer the "pillow theory." It is more comfortable for me.

Admittedly, in the 1960s and 1970s social scientists who engaged in curriculum materials development knew little about change processes in schools. I should say that practicing educators knew very little as well. Yet the social scientists were willing to press on with development of their ideas for purposes of creating new and exciting curriculum materials.

What they encountered was a hundred ton pillow, called education. The pillow was just there, not being changed from inside -- like all pillows. I would like to believe that the social scientists caused the pillow to restructure itself, but recent research tells me I am wrong (Hahn, 1985). As long as social scientists had funds and some encouragement to set forth their ideas, they caused some small dents to stay in the pillow. When they went away, the dents disappeared and the pillow returned to the status quo.

There are several reasons the pillow did not change. Four seem most important: 1) The matter of control. Who was to control curriculum development -- those on the outside (the social scientists) or those on the inside (the educationists)? 2) The lack of mutual respect. The so-called interlopers (the social scientists) often failed to grasp the myriad of problems faced by the educator. The educator discounted the educational credibility of the social scientist. 3) The lack of goal clarification. Often, social scientists were more concerned about discipline purity without regard to "fit" with the educational enterprise. On the other hand, it was difficult to know and understand what the goals were on the part of the educators or the enterprise. 4) The lack of productive communication.

Disciplinarians have often (correctly) been accused of being unable to convey the nature of what they are about except in language that is difficult to understand and too technical. Educators, too, have their own special language(s), often not grasped by the disciplinarian.

Now, in the late 1980s, it appears the pillow is being ripped open. The myriad of commission reports and research studies have, at least on the surface, caused the educational enterprise to address matters of reform. Out of concerns about (foreign) competition and other pressures, we are witnessing the beginning of that reform. Administrators are rethinking their leadership roles. The role of the teacher as a curriculum leader is being re-examined. Teacher education is going through some painful curricular changes, including more demand for liberal arts courses. The private sector is becoming more concerned with and involved in the product it receives at the end of 12 or 16 years of education. There is some evidence of a resurgence in curriculum development, especially in the sciences. I suspect the national research centers will begin to focus more clearly on educational policy issues and on strategies for change and improvement than they have in the past.

My point in saying all this is that I believe we have another chance to bring social scientists and educationists together in a mutually beneficial endeavor. We know more about educational change than we did 20 years ago. We know more about curriculum materials development than we did 20 years ago. We know more about the nature of the learner than we did 20 years ago. In the social sciences, while there is still much to learn, we have much more of an issue oriented and policy sense of things which should enable

social scientists not only to structure learning experiences (in collaboration with educationists) but also to address the many important issues we have with respect to new demands in citizenship education.

Issues To Address

I see four important issues we need to address, both in this conference and over the next year or so. I state them below.

1. Are the current, apparently enduring goals of social studies education worthy and appropriate for the student who will be a 21st century adult?

2. What should be the relative emphasis on traditional social studies course content and the social sciences?

3. What should be the role of the social scientist (and the social sciences) in addressing the current issues related to social studies curricular reform, especially emerging issues in citizenship education?

4. How can the educationist and the social scientist work together for curriculum improvement?

Before I close, I want to remind us that much of my discussion here took place in various forms 20 years ago. At that time one of my favorite social scientists, Kenneth Boulding (1971), stated a goal which we need to continue to consider.

> What formal education must do is to produce people who are fit to be inhabitants of the planet. This has become an urgent necessity because for the first time in human history we have reached the boundaries of our planet and have found it is a small one at that--the spaceship earth. This generation of young people have to be prepared to live in a very small and crowded spaceship. Otherwise they are going to get a terrible shock when they grow up and discover that we have taught them how to live in a world that has passed away. The nightmare of the educator is what Veblen called "trained incapacity," and we have to be constantly on the watch that this does not become one of our main products.

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